

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Roxanna Pierce, Communications Officer
Office of the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury
(615) 401-7806
roxanna.pierce@tn.gov

**Animal Shelters in Tennessee Vary in Quality and Availability;
State-level Standards and Guidelines Lacking**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - May 19, 2008 - Tennessee does not require animal shelters to follow standards of animal care, shelter design, facility procedures, staff training, or data reporting, according to a report released today by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury's Office of Research.

The study provides an overview of animal care and control issues in Tennessee and makes recommendations for improvement. "Other states require animal sheltering facilities to abide by minimum standards such as housing, environment, disease prevention, diet and exercise, personnel training, and other issues. Many of those states also require shelter registration or licensing, and in some cases state inspections, to operate. Tennessee does not," says Jessica Gibson, legislative research analyst for the Comptroller of the Treasury's Office of Research.

Tennessee traditionally has treated animal control and sheltering as local issues, primarily supported by local government funds and regulated by local ordinances. As a result, quality and availability of animal shelters vary across the state.

Not every city or county in Tennessee has an animal control or sheltering program. Animal control and shelter programs provide a number of services for communities such as protecting the safety and health of people and companion animals, housing and caring for homeless and stray animals, and protecting communities from dangerous or sick animals.

In addition, the state neither requires nor provides general training for animal control officers. The report explains that untrained officers could pose a risk to public safety, as well as to animals and themselves. Training may be essential to ensure that officers can perform all necessary functions, as well as limit liability.

Tennessee also does not collect data from animal shelters. Because shelters do not report data and there is no body designated to collect such information, it is unknown how many animal shelters exist in Tennessee, where they are located, the quality of their operations, or their euthanasia and adoption rates.

Tennessee does have a statewide spay/neuter law, but it is unclear how effective it is. Lack of definitions and strong incentives in the law increase the likelihood that the law is not being carried out as it was intended.

The report recommends to the General Assembly that it may wish to

consider requiring that animal shelters follow minimum standards; consider requiring training for animal control officers and shelter personnel; consider including enforcement mechanisms; and consider including definitions and stronger incentives for following the law.

The Comptroller of the Treasury's Offices of Research and Education Accountability provide non-partisan, objective analysis of policy issues for the comptroller, the General Assembly, other state agencies, and the public. The offices provide the legislature with an independent means to evaluate state and local government issues.

For more information and details about the report, please visit <http://www.comptroller.state.tn.us/cpdivorea.htm>

Download a pdf version of the report at <http://www.comptroller1.state.tn.us/repository/RE/AnimalShelters2008.pdf>

STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMPTROLLER OF THE TREASURY
JOHN G. MORGAN, COMPTROLLER
OFFICE OF RESEARCH
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 1700
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0268
<http://comptroller.state.tn.us>

###